

Stabilizing Housing for Families of Children who Experience Mental Health and/or Substance Use Challenges

Part I - Understanding the Challenges Families Face and the Benefits Available to Them

Abigail Kirkman

Assistant Director

SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center

Clarissa McGee

Mid-Oregon – Regional Manager

Oregon Family Support Network

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Disclaimer

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Statistics

There are approximately 1.5 million people listed as being without homes. Estimates show that this number is realistically 2 x higher.

Families experiencing homelessness are typically referred to as the hidden homeless – often “doubling up” with family or friends or staying in shelters.

Many families experiencing homelessness have needs beyond housing that have to be met in order to maintain stability.

At any given time, there are approximately 1.3 million students experiencing homelessness.



The Hidden Homeless

Living with others, or “doubling up,” carries more risk for families than living in shelters. They experience frequent moves, changes in schools, and increased worry and anxiety about overstaying their welcome.

Families with children who experience mental health issues/special needs have extremely complicated needs - over and above the issues of homelessness.

Needs such as:

- Mental health treatment
- Medication management
- Financial assistance
- Special Education assistance
- And many more...



My Story

I am the mother of five (three boys and two girls), now four adult children. My children and I are survivors of domestic violence. We each have our own diagnosis with varying degrees of severity. We lived in a very sweet, small home in Portland.

When we fled, we shared one room in my mother's house between five people and two dogs! When I wasn't working, we lived in my van in the driveway and looked for a place of our own while trying not to irritate my mother.

When we were finally settled, I had high hopes. My children, especially the younger four, displayed extreme behaviors in their youth. You might notice that I said EXTREME – extremely loud and disruptive.

Property Damage

Our neighbors complained. The landlord complained. I complained.

With extreme behaviors come extreme expenses. We were able to stay in our first apartment for eight months. My children broke the mirrored closet doors and a window, and left marks on every door. We did not get our deposit back. After that, things got consistently more expensive and difficult.

I was able to get us into our first (rental) house! I felt that we would be more successful if no one lived above us, below us, or beside us. I had it all planned! Enough bedrooms for everyone to be separate! The first and last month's rent and the security deposit took everything I had.



More Property Damage

People in the neighborhood hated us and they made it well-known to my children. The police were called numerous times due to their out-of-control behavior. At one point, we received an anonymous letter from an angry neighbor. They wanted to make sure we knew how much they disapproved of my kids, their behavior, and my parenting style. We all experienced bullying as a result.

We had to move!

Every time we moved (and it was often) the costs increased, including doubled security deposits, plus first and last month's rent. We never received the deposits back. I became an expert at painting and repairing walls and light fixtures.



Techniques for Peers Helping Families

I've learned many lessons along the way and dedicated the last 10 years of my life to helping other parents and children find and keep stable housing – so they don't have to experience what my family did.

As a Peer Support Specialist, I have worked with parents on learning new/different parenting skills, seeking mental health treatment, and learning how to navigate systems.

Peers can educate parents about:

- Navigating systems
- Finding resources/educational information
- Fair housing laws and discrimination
- Collaborating w/property managers and housing
- Advocacy/Empowerment
- Filing complaints/grievances
- Reasonable accommodations
- Networking



What is SOAR?

- SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR)
- A model for assisting eligible individuals to apply for Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits
- For individuals who are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, co-occurring substance use disorder, or other physical disabilities
- Sponsored by SAMHSA in collaboration with the Social Security Administration (SSA) since 2005
- All 50 states and Washington, D.C. currently participate



SSI for Children: The Basics

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- Benefits for low-income individuals
 - Financial need is a complete picture of income, living arrangement and family resources
- Children who are disabled or blind
- Federal benefit rate is \$794/month (2021)*
- Provides Medicaid in most states

*<https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-general-ussi.htm>

SSI Eligibility: Definition of Disability for Children

Mental health or physical condition(s)

- Diagnosis
- Documentation
- Duration

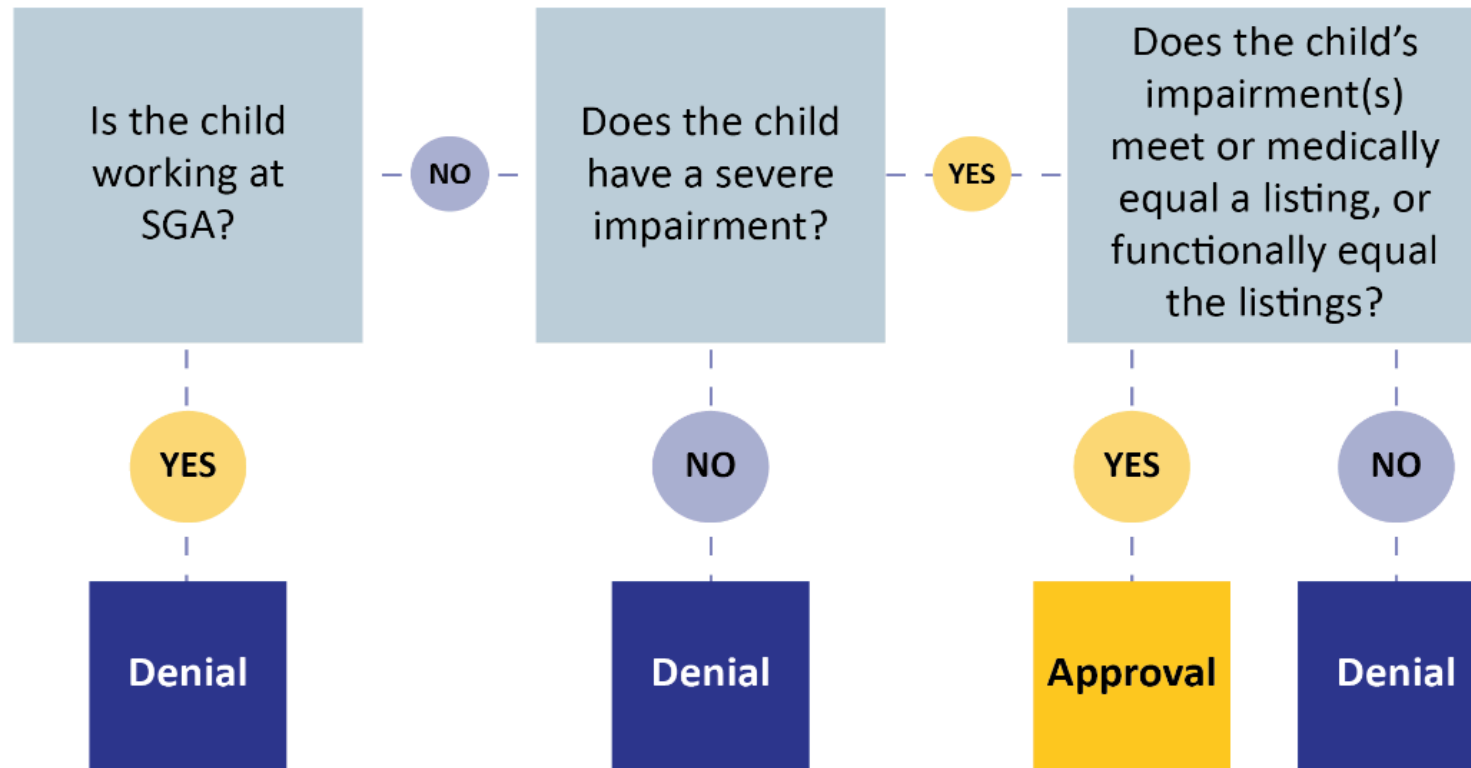


Functional Impairment(s)

- SSA will determine how the child's functional abilities compare to the functional abilities of a child of the same age who does not have physical or mental impairments.

Sequential Evaluation for Children

The Social Security Administration's Sequential Evaluation for Children

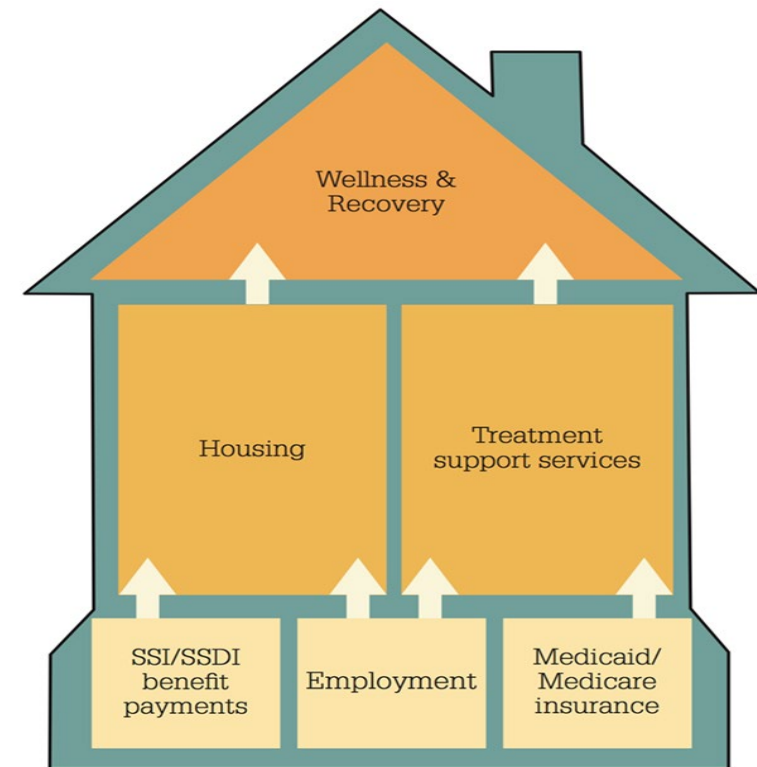


A Foundation for Recovery

More Than Income

- Access to health care and housing
- Increased education and employment opportunities
- Decrease in incarcerations and hospitalizations

SSI: One Brick in Foundation



What Makes SOAR Unique



SOAR-trained case workers are the heroes!



SOAR Works!



*National SOAR outcomes as of June 30, 2020

<https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/soar-outcomes-and-impact>

2020 National Outcomes

Application Type	Approval Rate	Number of Approvals	Average Days to Decision
Initial	65%*	4,265	115
Appeals	50%	868	211

Financial Outcomes		
Average General Assistance Reimbursement	Average Medicaid Reimbursement	Average Retroactive Back Payment
\$3,144	\$10,529	\$6,821

*As compared to a 30.8% approval rate for all SSI/SSDI applicants nationwide (*SSI Annual Statistical Report, 2019. Table 70. SSA Pub. No. 13-11827. Washington, D.C.: SSA, August 2020*)

Child SSI Application Outcomes

- Various states have successfully implemented SOAR for children and youth, of those states:
 - 593 decisions, 72 percent approval rates
 - Average of 107 days to decision

**Outcomes reported in the SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) program*



Guidance for Parents and Caregivers

- Connect with SOAR providers in your community
- Provide information about the child's functioning (at home, school, and in the community)
- Assist with identifying medical providers and educational documentation
- Connect with family peer networks in your area

SOAR WORKS for Children **SAMHSA**
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Children: What is it, who is it for, and how can **Parents/Caregivers** help?


- How can SSI for children help?**
 - Stabilizing income for your family and child(ren)
 - Income that can be used for supportive services (i.e. therapies, childcare)
 - Enhanced health insurance coverage (Medicaid)
- Who is eligible?**
 - Children (birth to turning age 18) with a physical or mental impairment that causes marked or severe functional limitations
 - Children and families with low income and resources
 - Note: If a child is unmarried, lives with their parents, and their parents do not receive SSI, a portion of the parents' income and resources may be considered
- How can I contribute and help a child access resources?**
 - Find a SOAR provider in your community and talk to them about your child's needs
 - Provide information about your child's functioning while at school, at home, at the doctor's office, etc.
 - Help identify additional sources of medical or educational documentation
 - Connect with family peer networks in your area
 - If interested in learning more, review or complete the SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum
- What resources are available?**
 - Understanding SSI for Children: <https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-child-ussi.htm>
 - Family Run Organizations: <https://www.fredla.org/>
 - SOAR Directory: <https://soarworks.prainc.com/content/contact-us>
 - SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum: The course can be a resource for parents to learn about SSI, the process of applying, and how they can become connected with resources <https://soarworks.prainc.com/course/soar-child-curriculum>

The SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance (TA) Center is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and is a national program designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) for eligible adults and children who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder.
Connect with your state SOAR contacts: <https://soarworks.prainc.com/directory>


Contact SOAR: soar@pra-inc.com | (518) 439-7415 x2 | <https://soarworks.prainc.com/>

Where Can You Assist?






Where can your agency or group assist with the SOAR process?



SOAR WORKS for Children



Identify the SOAR Intercept Where You Can Enhance the Process!

 Identify Applicants	 Assist with SSI Applications	 Obtain Medical Records, Evaluations & Co-signatures on MSRs	 Provide Systems-Level Support	 Support Resiliency and Recovery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School psychologists, counselors, social workers, McKinney-Vento Liasons • Parents or caregivers • Child welfare case workers, outreach workers, homeless services staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social workers, community behavioral health providers, outreach workers, homeless services staff, care coordinators • SOAR Practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers, school psychologists, counselors • Social workers, mental health providers • Parents or caregivers • SOAR Practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McKinney-Vento Liasons, HUD Continuum of Care • SOAR State and Local Leads • SOAR Practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach workers, social workers, care coordinators • Housing specialists, homeless services staff • SOAR Practitioners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify children who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness who have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder, as well as low income and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum • Gather medical and educational evidence • Write a Medical Summary Report and assist with the SSI application process • Collaborate with the State and Local SOAR Leads, SSA, and DDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill out an SSA-5665 Teacher Questionnaire • Write a letter documenting the child's limitations in functioning and supportive services provided • Assist with gathering educational evidence, such as: Individualized Education Program (IEP) records, IQ testing, special education services, school counseling, disciplinary reports • Gather medical evidence, such as hospital or clinic records and psychiatric evaluations, and arrange for additional testing as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite SOAR Practitioners to care coordination meetings • Participate in SOAR Steering Committee Meetings • Identify data-sharing opportunities to facilitate efficient SOAR referral and assistance • Dedicate funds to support SOAR Practitioner positions • Support SOAR Practitioners through mentoring, providing quality review of SSI applications, and monitoring data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify housing, employment, and education resources • Connect with treatment and support groups for the child and parents or caregivers • Assist with other supportive service needs, such as food assistance and other mainstream benefits for which the child and/or family may qualify

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Benefits of the SOAR Online Course



SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Online Course: Child Curriculum

- Standardized training provided across all geographic areas
- SOAR Leaders can coordinate follow-up training and support
- Course is FREE, web-based, and self-guided
- 20 CEUs from National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

Practice Cases: Videos and Records



XYZ Community Shelter
Housing is Healthcare!

PROGRESS NOTE

Date: 10/01/2017

Resident: The Williams Family (Kimberly,
Marshall and Jessica)

Case Worker: Sandy Jenkins

Location: Shelter Office

Some City Youth Mental Health Center
Recovery is Possible!

PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION

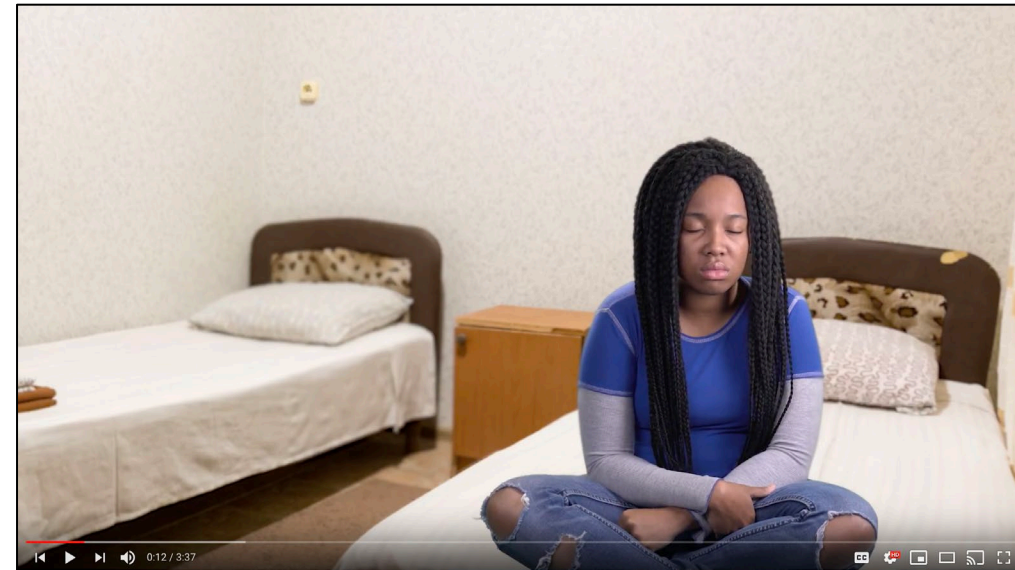
Program Participant: Marshall G. Williams
Participant ID: 1234567
Date of Birth: 02/19/2006
Gender: Male
Ethnicity: Caucasian

Diagnosis:

314.01 Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
300.02 Generalized Anxiety Disorder
Z55.9 Academic or Educational Problem



History of Present Illness:

Marshall has a history of ADHD and anxiety and has been taking Adderall daily since



Getting Involved with SOAR

- Training: 20 hours
- 20-40 hours per complete application
- SOAR Critical Components
- Outcome Tracking
- Benefit to Your Agency and the Individuals You Serve



Getting Involved with SOAR
You want to be a SOAR provider? That's great! Here's what to expect.

SOAR promotes recovery and wellness through increased access to Social Security disability benefits for eligible individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder. SOAR providers assist individuals with complete and quality applications. This is not an easy task, and we want to be sure that you understand the commitment required – we believe it is well worth the effort!

Training
The SOAR Online Course trains providers to assist individuals with the Social Security disability application process. The course includes an Adult Curriculum for assisting with Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) claims for adults and a Child Curriculum for assisting with SSI claims for children.

- The SOAR Online Course: Adult and Child Curriculums are free and are located on the SOARWorks website (<https://soarworks.prainc.com/content/soar-online-course-catalog>).
- Each curriculum consists of seven classes, each of which has a series of articles, short quizzes, and a practice case component. The practice case provides an opportunity for trainees to apply what they have learned in the course by completing a sample application packet for a fictitious applicant using SOAR techniques.
- It takes approximately 20 hours to complete each curriculum and participants can work at their own pace, starting and stopping as they wish. However, we encourage students to complete the curriculum within 30 days to retain the information learned.
- Upon successful completion, participants will receive 20 CEUs (continuing education units) from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

Many SOAR Local Leads offer one-day SOAR Online Course Review Sessions to review key components of the curriculum, discuss local/state practices, and connect new providers to local Social Security Administration (SSA) and DDS (Disability Determination Services) offices.

Time Commitment
We estimate that each SOAR application will take approximately 20-40 hours to complete, from initial engagement to receiving a decision on a claim. This generally occurs over the course of 60-90 days.

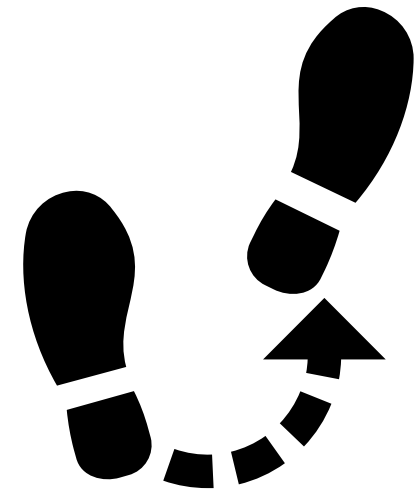
- The time spent on each application will vary depending on the amount of engagement that is needed as well as other variables such as the experience level of the SOAR worker. For example, engagement with an applicant who is residing in an institution may take 20 hours, while it may take longer to connect with someone who is living outside or difficult to contact.

SOAR Critical Components
SOAR providers with higher approval rates credit their success to implementing the SOAR critical components¹ and submitting high quality applications. Use of these components significantly increases the

Follow Up and Next Steps

In our follow up email, within 3-5 business days, look for:

- A link to the recording of today's presentation
- Today's presentation slides
- Invitations to upcoming events
- Additional resources
- Ways to stay connected with us
- A letter of participation



<https://www.nfstac.org>

| www.hhrctraining.org

Feedback Survey

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!

We hope to see you again on October 21st for Part 2!

Please complete the SAMHSA-required Feedback Survey before you go.

You can access the survey link in the chat.